

IN THE CLAIMS

1. - 21. (Cancelled)

22. (New) A method of controlling rate of oxygen transfer from the atmosphere into a liquid comprising,

storing the liquid in a closed container having walls exposed to the atmosphere at atmospheric pressure,

wherein the container is self supporting and the walls of the container comprise a rigid plastics material which allows oxygen to permeate the walls directly from the atmosphere into the liquid in contact with the walls at a rate of 13mg to 65mg of atmospheric oxygen per square metre of the wall area for each 1 millimetre of the walls thickness per 24 hour period at room temperature.

23. (New) The method according to claim 22 wherein the liquid comprises wine.

24. (New) The method according to claim 22 wherein the level of the liquid surface in the container creates a head space in the container and the liquid surface is separated from the head space by a barrier member floating on the liquid surface, the barrier member having a peripheral portion which is in sliding contact with the container walls so as to separate the liquid surface from the head space.

25. (New) The method according to claim 24 wherein the liquid comprises wine, and the ratio of contained volume of wine to surface area of the walls of the container falls within the range 5 to 30 litres per square metre of surface for each lmm of thickness of the walls.

26. (New) The method according to claim 25 wherein the wine is stored in the container for a period ranging between 4 months and 36 months and the total rate of oxygen transmission into the wine is less than 55mg/litre of wine/year.

27. (New) The method according to claim 26 wherein oak staves are suspended in the wine during the storage period.

28. (New) A container assembly for controlling rate of oxygen transfer from the atmosphere into a liquid stored in the container assembly comprising, a container with impermeable walls, and

a barrier member which provides a permeable barrier to control oxygen access from the head space in the container to a surface of the liquid, the barrier member having a construction which causes it to float on the liquid surface, with its edge in close proximity to the walls of the container, to substantially separate the liquid surface from the head space.

29. (New) The container assembly according to claim 28 comprising a peripheral flange surrounding the barrier member arranged so that it makes slidable peripheral contact with the walls of the container.

30. (New) A container assembly for controlling rate of oxygen transfer from the atmosphere into a liquid stored in the container assembly comprising,

a container with walls having an oxygen permeability of 13mg to 65mg of oxygen per square metre of area of walls of the container for each millimeter of the thickness of the walls per 24 hour period at room temperature, and

a barrier member for providing a barrier to limit oxygen access from head space in the container to a surface of the liquid the barrier member having a construction which causes it to float on the liquid surface, with its edge in close proximity to the walls of the container to substantially separate the liquid surface from the head space.

31. (New) The container assembly according to claim 30 comprising a peripheral flange surrounding the barrier member arranged so that it makes a slidable peripheral contact with the walls of the container.

32. (New) The container assembly according to claim 30 wherein the container comprises polyethylene.

33. (New) The container assembly according to claim 28 comprising a plurality oak staves disposed in the interior of the container in contact with the liquid.

34. (New) The container assembly according to claim 28 wherein the barrier member comprises a flexible buoyant core.

35. (New) The barrier member as defined in claim 34 wherein the flexible buoyant core is overwrapped with a film of material adapted to limit oxygen transmission through the core to the surface of the liquid.

36. (New) The barrier member according to claim 35 having a peripheral flange which comprises the peripheral edge of the film extending laterally beyond an edge of the core.

37. (New) The barrier member as defined in claim 28 comprising at least one tag extending from one side of the barrier member to assist with location and removal of the barrier member.

38. (New) The barrier member according to claim 37 wherein the at least one tag comprises a loop.

39. (New) The container assembly according to claim 34 comprising a plurality of oak staves suspended in liquid stored in the container.